



Constructing a ladder of transnational partnership working in support of marine spatial planning: Thoughts from the Irish Sea

Sue Kidd*, Lynne McGowan¹

Department of Civic Design, School of Environmental Sciences, University of Liverpool, Gordon Stephenson Building, 74 Bedford Street South, Liverpool L69 7ZQ, United Kingdom

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 26 February 2012

Received in revised form

29 January 2013

Accepted 12 March 2013

Available online

Keywords:

Marine spatial planning

Transnational partnerships

Ladder of transnational partnership working

Irish Sea

Ecosystem-based management

Ecosystem approach

ABSTRACT

This paper adds to the growing body of literature on partnerships and Marine Spatial Planning (MSP) by constructing a ladder of transnational partnership working which can act as an aid to partnership development. The first part draws upon partnership working and co-management literature and identifies 5 levels of transnational partnership working: Information Sharing; Administration Sharing; Agreed Joint Rules; Combined Organisation; and Combined Constitution and illustrates what these might entail with reference to established maritime partnerships. The second part of the paper then explores how these generic levels may be used to structure transnational partnership development in a particular marine setting. This draws upon the outputs of two Irish Sea Transnational Partnership Working events which were funded by the UK's Economic and Social Research Council, and in particular on the exploration of motivations for collaboration which was a key point of discussion. In conclusion the paper considers the strengths and weaknesses of the ladder and how it may be enhanced and used more widely to better understand and analyse existing transnational partnership activity and guide the development of new transnational partnerships in support of MSP.

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1. Introduction

Over the last 30 years the United Nation's Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) and the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) which entered into force in 1993, have been major driving forces behind efforts to improve the planning and management of marine areas. These global conventions are important not only in setting out duties to protect and where appropriate to rehabilitate and restore the marine environment and promote sustainable use, but also in advocating the ecosystem approach as the framework of understanding under which duties should be progressed (Maes, 2008). As a consequence many nation states are currently engaged in developing new arrangements for marine spatial planning (MSP), which is seen as a step towards ecosystem-based sea use management (Ehler and Douvère, 2007; Douvère and Ehler, 2009; Commission of the European Community, 2011). MSP not only considers environmental protection but aims to manage multi-sectoral uses of marine space, encompassing the increasingly

wide range of human activities and interests that seek to benefit from ecosystem goods and services. However, although national legislation and action are important in the delivery of UNCLOS and CBD ambitions, they are only part of the response that is needed. Critical to both conventions is a concern that planning and management should be undertaken at scales that reflect ecosystem functioning and that national level activities should nest within wider international spheres of action. The United Nations Environment Programme in collaboration with others has identified 64 distinct Large Marine Ecosystems (LMEs) a number of which lie within 18 regional seas (Duda and Sherman, 2002; Wang, 2004). UNEP recommends that these should be the focus of coordinated ecosystem-based planning and management arrangements.

In recognition of the importance of transnational action at regional sea level a number of international agreements have already been established. In European waters for example, these include the Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the North East Atlantic (OSPAR Convention), the Convention on the Protection of the Marine Environment of the Baltic Sea Area (HELCOM), The Convention on the Protection of the Black Sea Against Pollution, and the Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment and Coastal Region of the Mediterranean (the Barcelona Convention). While such developments are significant in strengthening the legal and institutional framework for

* Corresponding author. Tel.: +44(0)151 794 3111; fax: +44(0)151 794 3125.

E-mail addresses: suekidd@liv.ac.uk (S. Kidd), cd0u10a1@liverpool.ac.uk (L. McGowan).

¹ Tel.: +44 (0)151 794 3118; fax: +44(0)151 794 3125.

collaborative protection and management of the marine environment, from both an ecosystem approach and a MSP perspective they have their limitations. Concerns include issues of integration which are central to both concepts (Dickenson et al., 2010; Flannery and O Cinneide, 2012; Kidd, 2013). For example, such agreements tend to be sectoral rather than cross-sectoral in scope and are largely focused on environmental protection. Complementary activity co-ordinating the growing range of socio-economic interests and development ambitions in the marine environment, such as offshore oil and gas and renewable energy, marine aggregates and minerals, marine transport, and marine tourism is also needed, and ideally this should be brought together with environmental orientated partnership activity in a holistic way. In addition, agreements such as OSPAR and the Barcelona Convention operate at a high level with often limited connections to local level MSP activity, and are therefore partial in terms of stakeholder involvement. These characteristics mean that they can be distant from the causes of the problems that they seek to address, and the regimes that need to be involved in implementing appropriate responses. As a result, their effectiveness in delivery has been questioned (Joyner, 2009). Such critiques also reflect more fundamental shifts in perceptions of 'good' governance in environmental (and indeed other contexts) away from state centred approaches to modes which are more collaborative and participatory rather than top down (Duit and Galaz, 2008) and the fields of integrated coastal zone management and marine spatial planning have been particularly prominent in championing the benefits of partnership styles of governance (Fletcher and Potts, 2008; Bruns and Gee, 2009; Osterblom et al., 2010). It is in this context that interest is growing in the development of new transnational partnerships which can complement high level international agreements (where these exist) and support the integrated planning and management aspirations of the ecosystem approach and the new era of national level MSP activity (Khalimonov, 1999; Kern and Löffelsend, 2004; Berkes, 2005; Leslie and McLeod, 2007; Osterblom et al., 2010).

This paper aims to add to the growing body of literature on partnerships and MSP by providing a ladder of transnational partnership working that can be used to assist partnership development. The inspiration for the paper stems from work undertaken in the Irish Sea where for a number of years stakeholders from the six administrations with jurisdiction for the sea have been exploring the potential form and scope of transnational partnership arrangements to complement and support the rolling out of the new MSP regimes. The case is interesting in that it highlights the complexities that will be faced in many marine areas. The Irish Sea sits within the Celtic Sea/Biscay Shelf LME which is part of the North East Atlantic which falls under the OSPAR Convention. It is a semi enclosed sea within this wider area and has a distinct environmental and cultural identity. From the outputs of two events funded by the UK's Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC), it is evident that many stakeholders regard the Irish Sea as the 'natural' unit for transnational working and stakeholder engagement, while recognising the need to fit into the bigger Celtic Seas and North East Atlantic picture. The events also revealed multiple, widely supported motivations for collaboration. However, finding an appropriate way forward has proved difficult. The idea of outlining a ladder of transnational partnership working in support of MSP emerged from stakeholder discussions as a means of structuring partnership development. This paper is a response to this suggestion. The first part draws upon partnership working and co-management literature and develops a ladder with 5 levels of transnational partnership working: Information Sharing; Administration Sharing; Agreed Joint Rules; Combined Organisation; and Combined Constitution and illustrates what these might entail with reference to established maritime partnerships. The second part of

the paper then explores how these generic levels may be used to structure transnational partnership development in a particular marine setting by drawing upon the outputs of the Irish Sea Transnational Partnership Working events, and in particular on the exploration of motivations for collaboration which was a key point of discussion. In conclusion the paper considers the strengths and weaknesses of the ladder and how it may be enhanced and used more widely to better understand and evaluate existing transnational partnership activity and guide the development of new transnational partnerships in support of MSP.

2. Partnership working and co-management

Three aspects of the partnership working and co-management literature have provided inspiration for constructing the ladder. The first relates to partnership function, the second to the nature of the partnership building process and the third to degrees of informality and formality in partnership activity. Each of these areas will be explored in turn.

2.1. Partnership function

Arnstein's (1969) classic ladder of participation provides a useful starting point in considering different levels of partnership working (see Fig. 1). Although widely critiqued and the subject of many variations which have been developed to suit different settings, it is well known outside the academic community and is therefore felt to provide a good initial reference point for explaining the concept and purpose of the ladder. Arnstein's eight rungs start with those associated with non participation (manipulation and therapy); progressing to informing, consultation and placation which Arnstein describes as tokenism; and ending with partnership, delegated power and citizen control which Arnstein labels under citizen power. Central to Arnstein's ladder is a concern with the relative sharing of power in planning and management situations, and this is a particularly complex matter in the sea where it relates not only to each nation state and their national, regional and local stakeholders, but also between nation states themselves and the sea-wide stakeholder community. Arnstein's ideas have been

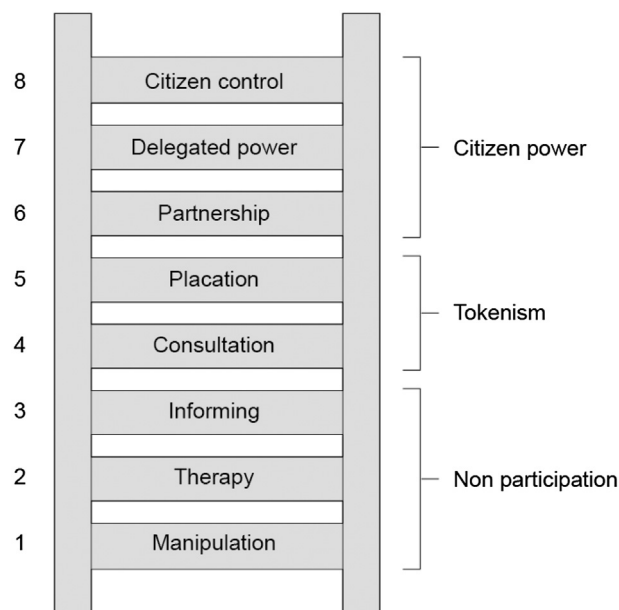


Fig. 1. Sherry Arnstein's ladder of citizen participation (Arnstein, 1969, p. 217).

considered extensively in relation to the co-management of natural resources including that related to marine areas (e.g. [Hersoug and Ranes, 1997](#); [Plummer and FitzGibbon, 2004](#); [Carlsson and Berkes, 2005](#)). Carlsson and Berkes contribution is particularly helpful in the context of this paper in suggesting that power sharing is often the result not the starting point for co-management processes and that it is useful in organisational development terms to focus initially instead on the *functional* character of different levels of co-management working. With this in mind they present a series of functional images of co-management that can be considered both as alternative approaches and as a form of ladder for co-management development. These are: an exchange system; joint organisation; co-management as a state nested system; co-management as a community nested system; and finally co-management as a network. The progression is from facilitating stakeholder dialogue alongside established patterns of responsibility, towards more collaborative action and shared responsibilities and ultimately extending to a devolved pattern or networked governance structure involving state, market and civil society players. This line of thinking is also reflected in other models of partnership working where other functions besides power sharing are also highlighted. [Gray \(1985\)](#) and [Pretty \(1994\)](#) for example both reinforce the concept of partnership working or collaboration as an activity that can facilitate mutual learning, in which multiple perspectives may be brought to bear on a problem, revealing its true complexity. In the context of marine planning and management, this could involve bringing together different sectors or users of the marine environment with differing development aspirations. By revealing the knowledge of different parties and developing an appreciation of potentially conflicting views, stakeholders may establish a “joint conceptualisation” about the future of an issue, enabling structuring ([Gray, 1985](#)) or self-mobilisation ([Pretty, 1994](#)) of stakeholders to take action to resolve problems and realise opportunities.

2.2. Partnership building processes

Carlsson's and Berkes are also concerned with the *process* of partnership development and this is also a subject that is widely discussed by other authors in the field of natural resource management and includes staged models which are often presented as a linear process. For example: [Pomeroy \(1998\)](#) outlines pre implementation, implementation and post implementation phases; [Venter and Breen \(1998\)](#) discuss progressive forming, storming, norming and performing phases; while [Selin and Chavez \(1995\)](#) envisage five phases elements – antecedents, problem setting, direction setting, structuring and outcomes. [Glasbergen \(2010\)](#) writing about sustainable business partnerships is one author who has translated this type of thinking into a ladder of partnership building activity consisting of five levels in the partnering process: Building Trust; Creating Collaborative Advantage; Constituting a Rule System, Changing a Market and Changing the Political Order. Glasbergen views progression from a pre-partnership state of often adversarial relations and the establishment of some form of initial mechanism for collaborative exchange of information which is seen to add value for all parties involved, through various degrees of collaborative working leading to the development of jointly agreed operational procedures. At the highest levels Glasbergen suggests that attention shifts from a focus on internal operational concerns to broader and more fundamental changes to the market and wider political order. Whilst changes to the market may be of relevance to MSP for example in terms of shifting patterns in the use of vulnerable marine resources, changes to the political order can be highly important and could involve for example new international agreements which institutionalise a

new sense of collective responsibility for the sea. Importantly, although Glasbergen's levels are set in a time frame and are envisaged as sequential, he acknowledges that this represents an idealized situation and that in practice the steps are unlikely to follow each other in a neat way. Similarly [Kelly et al. \(2012\)](#) note that governance and participation are non-linear, multi-faceted processes, and that the view of increasing effectiveness over time is inaccurate as the internal and external dynamics of partnerships change and effectiveness may decline as well as improve. However, Glasbergen suggests that the concept of a ladder is helpful in distinguishing distinct types of partnership activity that may be encompassed in partnership evolution.

2.3. Relative formality

A key feature of the analysis presented by both Carlsson and Berkes and Glasbergen is that the different levels they identify reflect a transition from more informal engagement between those with an interest in a particular resource management issue, to gradually more formalised processes and procedures that are shared between parties, and ultimately to significant readjustment to the existing institutional and legal order. Importantly both emphasise the value of each level on the ladder, and while there is a presumption that progression up the ladder is to be encouraged to secure the delivery of resource management ambitions, unlike [Arnstein's \(1969\)](#) Ladder of Participation or [Pretty's \(1994\)](#) typology of participation, both are careful to use language that presents each rung in a positive light. This reflects some of the criticisms of Arnstein's approach which have suggested that she tended to underplay the value of lower levels of action and overplay the benefits of the higher levels. A more qualified approach to the levels is felt to be particularly appropriate to the sea given the diffuse power environment of marine areas, the multi-level partnership working that seems to be needed, and the embryonic state of MSP in many parts of the world. Such complexities and associated uncertainty and change mean that simple linear models of partnership development are difficult to apply. For example, higher levels of partnership working may be beyond the current capacities and interests of many of those involved. Equally, state, market and civic society stakeholders may be uncomfortable with such a prospect for political, financial and bureaucratic reasons. More positively, some authors have argued that less formalised partnership arrangements can offer some significant advantages. These include: providing a less aggressive setting in which parties can come together for problem solving deliberation; flexibility to reflect the changing circumstances of actors and patterns of stakeholder interest; and allowing scope to adapt to developing understanding of the marine environment ([Joyner, 2009](#)). These latter points are central to the arguments of authors like [Berkes \(2005\)](#) and [Osterblom et al. \(2010\)](#) who suggest that co-management arrangements should be devised with a capacity for learning and adaptation in mind so that they are able to respond to the dynamic character of natural and social systems.

3. A ladder of transnational partnership working to support marine spatial planning

The literature cited above provides a foundation for formulating a ladder of transnational partnership working to support MSP which can be used to evaluate and develop existing partnership arrangements and establish new ones where appropriate. As stated in the introduction, to date international conventions and regional sea agreements have been significant drivers for transnational partnership working activity particularly related to environmental issues, however, with the emergence of MSP and a growing range of

development interests in the sea the potential scope of transnational partnerships is broadening to encompass multiple objectives and uses of marine space which have trans-boundary impacts and implications. As a consequence, reflection on the adequacy of existing partnership arrangements for the sea is highly topical and we are entering an era of experimentation and development of partnership structures. For example in a European context, the Baltic Sea Region is an interesting case in point. Here established sea and environmentally focussed partnership arrangements associated with HELCOM, and more landward and development orientated arrangements associated with VASAB (an Intergovernmental multilateral cooperation between the 11 countries of the Baltic Sea Region in spatial planning) are increasingly being drawn together to guide MSP activities at a regional sea scale (HELCOM and VASAB, 2010). The region has also recently established a project titled PartiSEApate which will test and develop new instruments/models on how multi-level governance mechanisms can support MSP throughout the Baltic Sea Region (PartiSEApate, 2012). It can be envisaged that the planned EU directive on MSP and ICZM may stimulate similar activity in other European maritime contexts over the next few years (Qiu and Jones, 2013).

It is intended that the ladder presented in Fig. 2 may inform developments such as these and that examples of existing partnerships structures can provide useful illustrations of the type of activities that may occur on each rung. The rungs of the ladder together with examples are therefore explained below.

3.1. The rungs explained

The first rung on the ladder is *Information Sharing*. The focus here is upon: building trust among the various state, market and civil society stakeholders with marine interests; developing understanding and appreciation of different stakeholder perspectives and about the interaction of natural and social systems that relate to the sea (including MSP arrangements); and building capacity that can support more integrated approaches to MSP. At this level it is envisaged that parties will continue to work independently but their collaboration may be supported by a small central resource which undertakes for example stakeholder mapping, facilitation of workshops bringing parties together around issues of common

concern, and the collation of web resources. The main added value relates to improved inter-organisational relations and wider social learning that can be applied in stakeholders' different spheres of activity. This type of activity is for example particularly prominent in the mission of the Wadden Sea Forum which seeks to foster the sustainable development in the Wadden Sea Region through exchange of information on experiences and best practice. This is operationalised through the activities of a series of stakeholder working groups covering: integrated coastal zone management; shipping and harbours; energy, industry and infrastructure; agriculture; tourism; fisheries; and cultural identity (Wadden Sea Forum, 2012; De Jong, 2005).

The second rung entails *Administration Sharing* in areas where there is perceived to be some advantage in closer collaboration. This could take many forms and include for example bilateral cooperation between particular nation states or more extensive multilateral collaborations at a transnational level. The nature of collaboration may be short term and task-focussed or entail longer term collaborative relationships. The Atlantic Arc Commission is an example of a long term partnership that has so far mainly operated at this level. Established in 1989 it is one of the six Geographical Commissions in the Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions of Europe and it brings together a network of coastal authorities with shared interests in the Atlantic area. Supported by a Political Bureau, the Commission has the task of promoting regional interests to EU bodies and member states through the production of strategic documents; active participation in consultations on European policies; and permanent exchange with representatives of EU and national governments. Although to date its activities have been mainly land focused it is increasingly looking to the sea. For example the Commission has been at the forefront of advocating the development of a European Union Strategy for the Atlantic Area promoting a strategic approach for example to fisheries, aquaculture, marine energy, maritime transport, climate change adaptation, marine minerals, blue biotechnology, marine knowledge and monitoring, maritime safety and security; and maritime training and education (Atlantic Arc Commission, 2012; Wise, 2000).

The third rung on the ladder involves *Agreed Joint Rules* where stakeholders wish to establish common procedures or protocols related to specific areas of activity. These could cover for example, marine data collection and exchange protocols, common approaches to environmental impact assessment, or to marine management measures associated with different forms of marine development. The added value of transnational partnership working of this type could include extended data access and usability, and improved efficiency, consistency and synergy between particular aspects of MSP. The Integrated Coastal Zone Management Protocol for the Mediterranean is an ambitious example of this type of partnership working. It is a legally binding instrument about coastal management aimed at delivering better management of the Mediterranean coastal zone, as well as dealing with the emerging coastal environmental challenges, such as climate change. The Protocol requires signatory states to develop national ICZM Strategies which, in turn, should be put into practice through corresponding regional and local action plans and operational instruments. The Protocol came in to force in 2009 and countries that have signed up so far include France, Slovenia, Albania, Spain, Syria and Montenegro (Barcelona Convention 2007; House, 2010). This level of activity sees a shift to more formalised arrangements but remains at the 'lite' end of the ladder with central resourcing maintained at a relatively low level. This may be supplemented by additional resources targeted at specific areas and perhaps strengthening use being made of more formalised partnership structures operating at other spatial scales. Such modes of

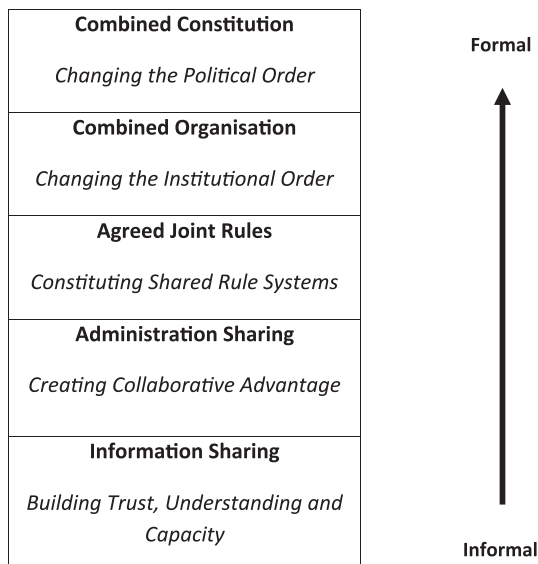


Fig. 2. A ladder of transnational partnership working to support marine spatial planning. Developed from Carlsson and Berkes (2005) and Glasbergen (2010).

transnational partnership working retain the flexibility and adaptability that many consider necessary to respond to the dynamic natural and social setting of MSP. However, their ability to deliver a step change in MSP integration within regional sea areas

may be limited, and more formal modes of partnership working may be judged to be necessary to achieve this. Such limitations have recently been raised in relation to effectiveness of the ICZM Protocol for the Mediterranean (Shaw et al., 2013).



Fig. 3. The Irish Sea.

Combined Organisation is a step in this direction. This may entail for example, the creation of new joint research institutes, joint planning teams, or other formal institutional arrangements of a transnational nature. The Northern Dimension could be considered to be a high level example of a partnership of this type. It operates through various formal governance structures which bring together European Union countries, Norway, Iceland and Russia to consider a range of issues including those related to planning and management of the Barents and Baltic Seas and the Arctic (Northern Dimension in Public Health and Social Wellbeing, 2007; Wallis and Arnold, 2011). The Trilateral Cooperation on the Protection of the Wadden Sea and its associated Common Wadden Sea Secretariat (Enemark, 2005; Common Wadden Sea Secretariat, 2010a,b) is a more localised transnational partnership that could also be described as demonstrating *Combined Organisation* attributes. The Wadden Sea Secretariat for example is charged with the collection and assessment of information with regard to Wadden Sea protection, management and monitoring including progress in

the implementation of the decisions of the joint ministerial conferences.

The fifth and final rung on the ladder *Combined Constitution* takes this formalisation process to a further level and through new legal agreements may bring a new political order to the management of a particular sea area. For example HELCOM, which was established to support the delivery of the Helsinki Convention on the Protection of the Marine Environment of the Baltic Sea Area works through pooled efforts as: an environmental policy maker; an environmental information focal point; a body for developing recommendations; a supervisory body dedicated to ensuring that HELCOM environmental standards are fully implemented by all parties throughout the Baltic Sea and its catchment area; and a co-ordinating body, ascertaining multilateral response in case of major maritime incidents (HELCOM, 2009; Backer et al., 2010). Within HELCOM further cooperation or steps in support of its *Combined Constitution* may be achieved through the possibility of establishing new networked divisions or responsibilities. It can be anticipated

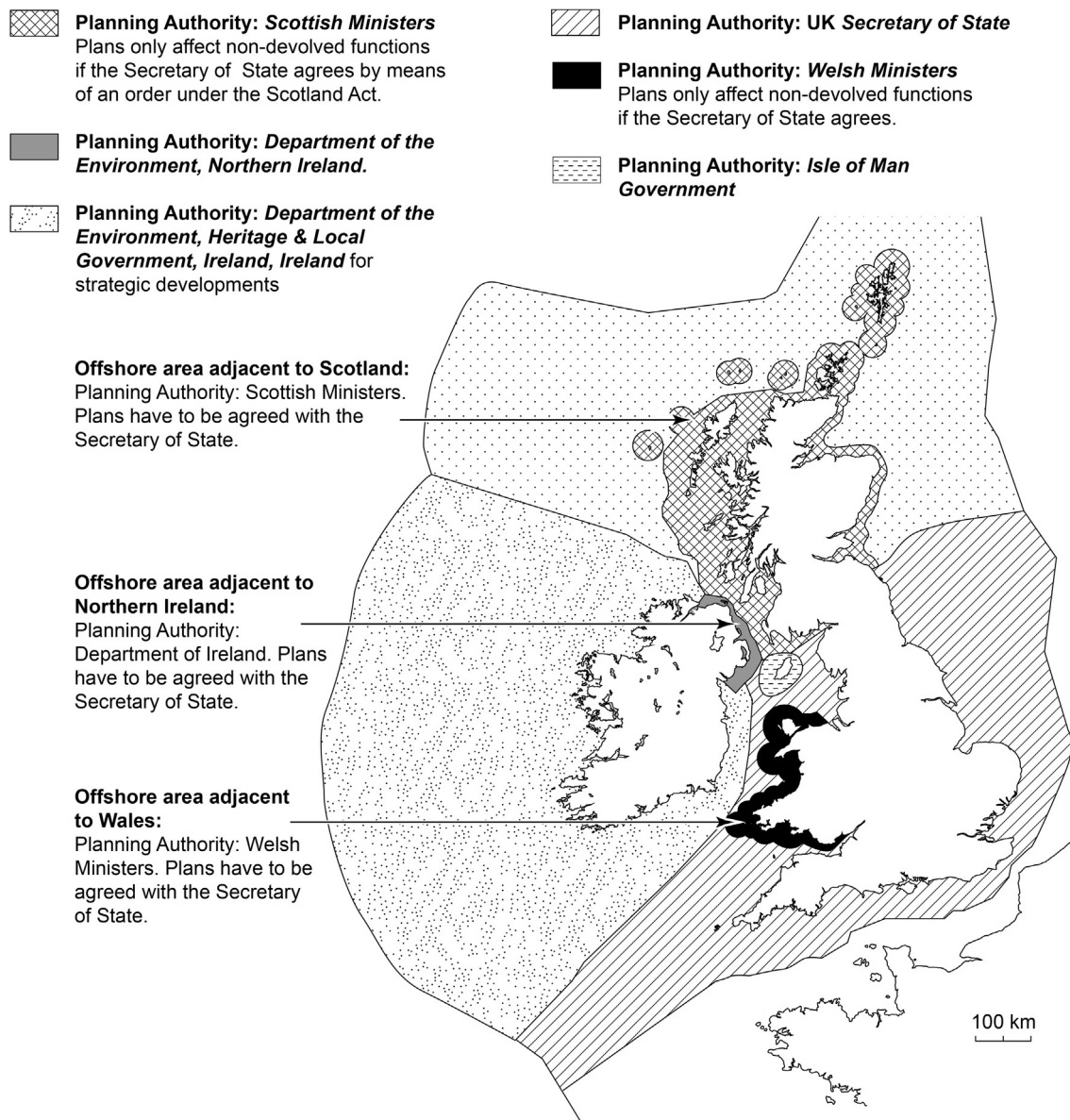


Fig. 4. Marine spatial planning jurisdictions in the Irish Sea.

therefore, that the degree of stakeholder commitment in terms of time, resources and relinquishing power to shared transnational partnership working in support of MSP will be greater towards the top of the ladder.

3.2. Some comments on the application of the ladder

Before illustrating how the ladder may help structure transnational partnership development using the Irish Sea as a case study, a few comments on its general application are necessary. The ladder has been constructed to encourage reflection on the spectrum of transnational partnership working approaches that could be applied in any sea area. Given the possibility that multiple levels of partnership working may be needed, it seems overly heavy handed to assume that the highest levels should be sought in all instances. All levels of the ladder should therefore be regarded of value in their own right and they may be developed individually or in a sequenced and progressive manner as illustrated in the examples cited above. Equally multiple levels may be evident in any one partnership and the precise configuration of levels may vary over time. The first level *Information Sharing* is however envisaged as a common starting point for partnership development and an important continuing element in most situations even where partnerships move on to more formalised partnership arrangements.

4. Applying the ladder to the Irish Sea

As indicated earlier, inspiration for developing the ladder outlined above emerged from stakeholder discussions associated with two events funded by the UK's Economic and Social Research Council related to Transnational Partnership Working in support of MSP in the Irish Sea (Kidd, 2011a). Although formal MSP activity is still at a very early stage of development in the region, (see Figs. 3 and 4 for map showing the location and MSP responsibilities in the Irish Sea and Kidd, 2011a,b for a 2011 MSP position statement for England, Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland, Ireland and the Isle of Man) it has been the focus of two marine spatial planning pilot exercises which informed the development of the 2009 UK Marine and Coastal Access Act and related legislation in Scotland and Northern Ireland (JNCC, 2004 and the *Marine Spatial Planning Pilot Consortium*, 2006). More recently it has seen an ambitious stakeholder led process for recommending the location of new Marine Conservation Zones in the Irish Sea (*Irish Sea Conservation Zones*, 2011). The area is also the home of long established coastal partnerships such as the Welsh Coastal and Maritime Partnership, the North West Coastal Forum and the Solway Firth Partnership. As a consequence appreciation of the benefits and challenges of partnership working and stakeholder engagement in coastal and marine matters is perhaps more advanced than in many areas. This may account for the strong interest in the two events held in spring and early summer 2011. The first of these was attended by over 70 delegates representing a good geographical and sectoral spread of stakeholders with an interest in the Irish Sea. These included those directly involved in MSP developments at a European level and from all six Irish Sea administrations as well as other government agencies with marine interests, local and regional authorities, private sector interests including fishing, oil and gas and wind energy, recreational users and NGO's concerned with natural and cultural heritage conservation.

The starting point was an exploration of stakeholder motivations for transnational partnership working in support of MSP and there was widespread support for such a development. As one delegate concluded '*Transnational partnership working is intrinsic to effective MSP for the Irish Sea – you simply can't have MSP without it.*' Analysis of the outcome of roundtable discussions indicates broad

agreement around the motivations for transnational partnership activity shown in Table 1. These provide a useful basis for partnership building in the region and can be mapped onto to the Ladder of Transnational Partnership Working to provide an indication of where the balance of stakeholder interest lies at the present time. The outcome of mapping is shown in Table 2.

Perhaps unsurprisingly given the current early stage of MSP development in the Irish Sea, the balance of interest clearly falls towards the 'lite' end of the ladder. Support is particularly evident for Information Sharing at the Irish Sea scale, with a range of perspectives emerging as to what the focus of this might be, at least in the short term. The most frequently cited motivation '*Facilitating knowledge exchange, improved dialogue, shared understanding, and capacity building*' provides a good summary of what might be the overall function for such a system, and '*Providing a broad-based forum for stakeholder engagement and enabling stakeholders to bring agendas to a wide audience*' indicates support for this being cast widely and in an open manner to encompass all those with Irish Sea interests. Many stakeholders would also like to explore forms of Administration Sharing with '*Improving efficiency, avoiding duplication of effort and costs, and opening up access to new funding opportunities*' being cited as a strong motivation for this across all stakeholder groupings. Those directly engaged with MSP delivery and in MSP research and activities such as Environmental Impact Assessment and Strategic Environmental Appraisal were particularly interested in '*facilitating sharing of information and data*', while many private sector and civil society stakeholders tended to emphasise joint organisation of MSP activities as a way of '*Encouraging an integrated, multi-use approach to this intensively used shared resource*' and '*Facilitating a joined up approach which recognises that stakeholder interests cross administrative boundaries*'. Interestingly this perhaps reveals some of the underlying tensions that might occur not just in transnational partnership development, but also for partnerships within jurisdictions, with different sectors having conflicting objectives for the use of marine space, and some being more ambitious than others in terms of progressing up the ladder. However, there were a number of areas where the benefits of Agreed Joint Rules were identified including '*Facilitating a coordinated approach to international/EU obligations*' and '*Helping*

Table 1

Stakeholder Motivations for Transnational Partnership Working in the Irish Sea (Source: Kidd, 2011a) (Motivations are listed broadly in order of frequency of reference in the notes from the stakeholder roundtable discussions).

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|---|
| <p>Transnational partnership working can support marine spatial planning in the Irish Sea by:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Facilitating knowledge exchange, improved dialogue, shared understanding, and capacity building. 2. Facilitating an approach which is consistent with the transnational scale of natural processes. 3. Increasing understanding of cross-boundary issues and impacts. 4. Facilitating sharing of information and data. 5. Encouraging an integrated, multi-use approach to this intensively used shared resource. 6. Facilitating a coordinated approach to international/EU obligations. 7. Improving efficiency, avoiding duplication of effort and costs, and opening up access to new funding opportunities. 8. Providing a broad-based forum for stakeholder engagement and enabling stakeholders to bring agendas to a wide audience. 9. Facilitating a joined up approach which recognises that stakeholder interests cross administrative boundaries. 10. Helping to develop a coordinated approach to major cross-boundary development issues. 11. Building cooperation and developing areas of joint working and common practice. 12. Developing a better appreciation of the shared maritime Celtic heritage, culture and perspective. 13. Providing a forum to strengthen regional sea, national and local maritime governance and identity. |
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Table 2

Mapping of Irish Sea stakeholder motivations onto the ladder of transnational partnership working. (Developed from Kidd, 2011a,b.)

Ladder of transnational partnership working in support of MSP	Stakeholder motivations for transnational partnership working in the Irish Sea
<i>Combined constitution</i> Changing the political order <i>Combined organisation</i> Changing the institutional order <i>Agreed Joint Rules</i> Constituting shared rule systems	Building cooperation and developing areas of joint working and common practice Helping develop a coordinated approach to major cross-boundary development issues Facilitating a coordinated approach to international/EU obligations. Building cooperation and developing areas of joint working and common practice Improving efficiency, avoiding duplication of effort and costs, and opening up access to new funding opportunities
<i>Administration sharing</i> Creating collaborative advantage	Encouraging an integrated, multi-use approach to this intensively used shared resource Facilitating a joined up approach which recognises that stakeholder interests cross administrative boundaries Facilitating sharing of information and data
<i>Information sharing</i> Building trust, understanding and capacity	Facilitating knowledge exchange, improved dialogue, shared understanding, and capacity building. Facilitating an approach which is consistent with the transnational scale of natural processes. Increasing understanding of cross-boundary issues and impacts. Providing a broad-based forum for stakeholder engagement and enabling stakeholders to bring agendas to a wide audience Developing a better appreciation of the shared maritime heritage, culture and perspectives Providing a forum to strengthen regional sea, national and local maritime governance and identity

develop a coordinated approach to major cross boundary development issues' such as renewable energy development. With the possible exception of 'Providing a forum to strengthen regional sea, national and local maritime governance and identity' which could be read in a number of ways, none of the motivations to emerge from the workshops suggested the highest levels of partnership development – Combined Organisation and Combined Constitution. Again this might simply reflect the early stage of both MSP and transnational partnership development in the region rather than an opposition to such a development in the long term. The findings suggest though that it would be wrong to assume that these higher levels were viewed by stakeholders as the ultimate and desired outcome of partnership building in the Irish Sea.

5. Some strengths and weaknesses of the ladder

So what can this illustration of the use of the ladder in the context of the Irish Sea tell us about its strengths and weaknesses? In terms of strengths, the ladder does seem to offer the potential to bring order to what can seem very disparate motivations for transnational partnership working in support of MSP and identify where the balance of stakeholder interest might lie. In so doing it can act as a focus for discussion about the initial form and possible trajectory of partnership development which can help stakeholders chart a path forward. The Irish Sea example, suggests that it is right to see development of *Information Sharing* as the grounding for partnership building and a level of ongoing value as partnerships evolve and mature. Higher levels of partnership working may be more attractive to some stakeholders than others and the idea that multiple levels of partnership activity can run alongside each other as circumstances, interest and understanding changes seems to be sensible. Critically it suggests that higher levels of partnership working need not necessarily include all stakeholders and that such collaborations may be task-focussed and time limited as well as ongoing. However in the spirit of trust, social learning and capacity building, some linkage between higher level collaborations and the wider sea community through *Information Sharing* seems desirable.

In terms of weaknesses, the ladder could be viewed with caution by some as it seems to imply a natural progression to the higher levels to which many stakeholders might not aspire and some may find threatening. This may be because they suggest a redistribution

of power away from those who currently hold it, or what some may view as the development of time consuming, costly and unnecessary levels of collaboration which restricts free movement of individual stakeholder groupings. Perversely such criticisms could be turned to good effect by using the ladder to expose some of the tensions that lie behind partnership working situations, particularly in complex international contexts such as the sea and to promote debate around these issues as means of finding a way forward.

6. Conclusions

By providing a tool which can aid the development of transnational partnership working in the sea, the ideas set out above do appear to have a role in responding to the integrated planning and management ambitions which are central to the ecosystem approach advocated by UNCLOS and the CBD and concepts of marine spatial planning. As shown through the exploration of the Irish Sea example, the ladder can be used to help visualise different modes of transnational partnership working, identify the forms of partnership that are most favoured in a particular context, and chart partnership development. It may also provide a tool for evaluating existing transnational partnership arrangements and identifying where adjustment and development may be desirable. As a consequence there does seem to be merit in extending this line of thinking further and the following are put forward as areas where refinement and enhancement of the ladder could be beneficial.

1. Further expansion of what might be entailed in developing each rung of the ladder would be a good starting point. For example, there has been little space in the context of this paper to integrate the very useful insights of key authors such as Barbara Gray (e.g. 1985, 1989) on the tasks that may be associated with different stages of partnership building. This could help those involved in facilitating partnership development to identify key types of support that might be useful at each level.
2. Only a few examples of existing transnational partnership arrangements that reflect the different rungs on the ladder have been presented. The collation of a more extensive and detailed set of case studies including those from non European contexts could be a useful resource and could help to elaborate the challenges and benefits associated with different modes of activity.

3. The possibility that multiple levels of transnational partnership working may be useful to facilitate an integrated approach to MSP is often put forward. These may range from bilateral arrangements associated with a shared estuary, through to activity around a small regional sea such as the Irish Sea, to partnership activity at the LME level and beyond. This begs the questions as to whether different levels of transnational partnership working are more relevant than others to particular scales of concern. Further consideration of this may also be useful.
4. Finally, the discussion here has focussed on the application of the ladder in the context of the sea, but the ideas presented could also have value in other environmental planning and management contexts where transnational partnership working might be beneficial such as extensive water catchments and transnational river corridors e.g. the Danube Delta. This also seems to merit examination.

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank Liz Charter Principal Biodiversity Officer (Strategy and Advocacy) in the Department of Environment, Food and Agriculture of the Isle of Man Government for sparking the initial idea for this paper and for her useful thoughts on naming the steps of the ladder in a user friendly way.

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